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May 07, 2010

Mr. Douglas Bosco, Chairman
California Coastal Conservancy
13th Floor, 1330 Broadway
Oakland, CA 94612

Project Name: Watsonville Slough Acquisitions Augmentation
File No. 08-101-02

Dear Chairman Bosco,

I am writing in support of the Watsonville Slough Acquisitions Augmentation of the 2008 grant award to the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County to allow for the purchase of the 3.9 acre Wait property and to fund additional restoration planning and implementation projects in the middle Watsonville Sloughs.

The Coastal Conservancy received NCWC grant funding to purchase the Bryant-Habert property. There will be a surplus amount that would be appropriate to apply toward purchase of the adjacent Wait property. There will be an additional \$200K that the Land Trust would use in partnership with the RCD, Watsonville Wetlands Watch and others to fund restoration planning and implementation projects. Immediate priorities include habitat improvements to the upper pond above the CRLF breeding pond, restoration of the southern ag fields that border the Bryant-Habert parcel, and restoration of the northern portion of Bryant-Habert.

The environs of the Watsonville Sloughs are a highly valued and unique freshwater wetland resource situated adjacent to Monterey Bay within the California central coast. Six individual sloughs (Watsonville, Harkins, Struve, West Branch Struve, Galligan, and Hanson) sustain large wetland marsh and riparian habitats for a variety of wildlife and native plants.

The proposed acquisition in the middle Watsonville Sloughs will expand the presence of wetland/upland habitat and improve the water quality in this region of the slough. The Middle Watsonville Slough is the backbone of the larger Watsonville Slough system and serves as the confluence for several of the upper sloughs before it drains toward the Monterey Bay. It includes several important wetlands and the acquisition of this property will provide the opportunity for wetland habitat restoration, enhanced slough drainage, and improved water quality. Improvements to the Watsonville Slough will contribute greatly to the overall ecological quality of the slough system.

Moving forward the RCDSCC is eager to continue its commitment to habitat restoration, water quality protection, and conservation of farmland through additional support of the Bryant/Habert and Harkin's Slough properties. The RCDSCC is committing staff time each year to write grants for restoration and management of these sites as well as commit staff to attend and actively participate in the Land Trust's Technical Advisory Committee for the sites.

The Watsonville Slough Wetland Protection project is a unique opportunity to acquire freshwater coastal wetlands in the central coast region and permanently preserve and enhance them through stewardship, and restoration. The strategic location of the project lands makes the opportunity to purchase and manage the project lands for conservation benefits particularly compelling.

We urge your funding of this grant to take advantage of the immediate opportunity to advance the health of this critical ecosystem.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

The mission of the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County is to help people protect, conserve, and restore natural resources through information, education, and technical assistance programs.



Karen Christensen, Executive Director

May 7, 2010

Douglas Bosco, Chairman
California State Coastal Conservancy
1330 Broadway, 13th Floor
Oakland, CA 94612-2530

Re: Support for Watsonville Slough Acquisitions Augmentation (May 27, 2010 Meeting)
USFWS National Coastal Wetland Grant to the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County

Dear Mr. Bosco:

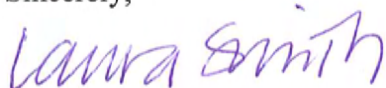
The Nature Conservancy strongly supports the Coastal Conservancy staff recommendation whereby the Coastal Conservancy would authorize augmenting its November 6, 2008 authorization to the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County to include acquisition of approximately 3.9 acres (the Wait Trust property) and restoration planning in middle Watsonville Slough. We understand that this authorization would remain subject to the conditions of the Conservancy's November 6, 2008 authorization and the USFWS National Coastal Wetland Conservation grant.

Over many years, The Nature Conservancy has consistently identified Watsonville Slough, including the middle Slough, as a top priority for biodiversity conservation. The Land Trust of Santa Cruz County and other partner organizations are in the front lines implementing and expanding upon our shared vision for this area. We applaud the Land Trust for successfully taking the lead to acquire priority private lands in the area to manage for conservation purposes in collaboration with adjacent public ownerships, numerous partners and the community.

The Watsonville Slough system is recognized as one of the largest and most significant wetland habitats on California's Central Coast. In 2009, The Nature Conservancy assisted the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County with \$1.7 million in land acquisition grants for middle Watsonville Slough. In addition to key acquisitions already completed or pending, the Land Trust now has the opportunity to purchase the Wait property to further advance protection and restoration goals.

The Nature Conservancy appreciates the Coastal Conservancy's exceptional support for conservation action at Watsonville Slough. We urge you to approve augmenting the purpose of the 2008 NCWC grant to the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County to include additional land acquisition and restoration in the middle Watsonville Slough. Thank you again for your support.

Sincerely,



Laura Smith
Monterey Project Manager



Watsonville Wetlands Watch

P.O. Box 1239 • Freedom, CA 95019

www.watsonvillewetlandswatch.org

"Dedicated to protecting, restoring and appreciating the wetlands of the Pajaro Valley"

Mr. Douglas Bosco, Chairman

California Coastal Conservancy

13th Floor, 1330 Broadway

Oakland, CA 94612

Re: WATSONVILLE SLOUGH ACQUISITIONS AUGMENTATION (File No. 08-101-02)

Dear Chairman Bosco:

Watsonville Wetlands Watch is pleased to write a letter of support for the State California Coastal Conservancy staff recommendations to augment the Conservancy's November 6, 2008 authorization to the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County. This augmentation would allow for the purchase of 3.9 acres of property directly adjacent to the Bryant-Habert property, which is currently in escrow. This parcel is titled The Wait Trust property.

Acquisition of The Wait Trust property would offer a significantly enhanced opportunity for restoring this region of Middle Watsonville Slough. Consequently, after the Wait Trust acquisition by the Land Trust, the remaining grant funds will be used for restoration planning and design in Middle Watsonville Slough. This type of restoration planning is in line with the mission of Watsonville Wetlands Watch and we heartily support it.

The mission of Watsonville Wetlands Watch is to protect, restore, and foster appreciation of the freshwater wetlands of the Pajaro Valley. We have collaborated actively with the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County over the past three years to support their conservation projects. The Land Trust's Middle Watsonville Slough project supports and enhances our mission. Watsonville Wetlands Watch is one of the leading organizations in this area providing direct native plant restoration to over 550 acres throughout the Pajaro Valley watershed and reaching thousands of school age students annually through hands-on, meaningful wetland environmental education.

The Wait Trust acquisition and use of the remaining grant funds for restoration will foster the protection and enhancement of the freshwater coastal wetlands of Watsonville, improving floodplain function in Watsonville Slough, and providing new opportunities for compatible public access and hands-on stewardship and environmental education.

Partnering with the City of Watsonville and the Pajaro Valley Unified School District to sponsor the
Fitz Wetlands Educational Resource Center
500 Harkins Slough Road, Watsonville, CA 95076 (831) 728-1156

Watsonville Wetlands Watch is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization

Watsonville Wetlands Watch partners and collaborates with like organizations to build wetlands stewardship and education in the Watsonville community. The purchase of the Wait Trust parcel furthers this mission, and overall wetland conservation and education within the central coast of California.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kris Beall".

Kris Beall
Executive Director
Watsonville Wetlands Watch
831.728.1156 Ext. 3

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